MARION HARLAND (Mrs. Terhune)

The Useful Old Age of Marion Harland

By FRANCES L. GARSIDE

AWAY back in the beginning when one learned cookery by taking no account of the eggs and butter wasted in experimenting, there lived a young woman in Virginia by the name of Mary Virginia Hawes.

She couldn't cook; why should she try? Her mother had any number of slaves to do the work and a white girl "of quality" wasn't expected to appear in the kitchen. But—she married a preacher! And those who marry preachers must learn in time to do their cooking, as well as look pleased when unexpected company comes to stay an unlimited time.

Her husband was a Presbyterian preacher; his name was Edward Peyson Terhune, and he took his young wife to Newark, N. J., to live, and she took with her four slaves and five cook books. This was in 1859.

"The cook books had been given me as wedding presents," she said, "and I found that all five of them were not worth the room they took on the kitchen shelf. One, Eliza Leslie's Cook Book, which had been specially recommended to me, I found later was written by a spinster who had never been in a kitchen in her life. Not that being a spinster makes any difference; spinsters can become good cooks as well as married women, but there isn't the same incentive to drive them to it. A hungry man is most educational.

"I couldn't cook. I knew what good cooking was, but I hadn't the knowledge to teach my slaves how it should be done. I will never forget how I suffered because of my ignorance, nor how every one imposed on me. And not one of those five cook books did me a bit of good. They took it for granted that the woman using them knew how to cook. It was just as if a child at school were given geometry to study who had never learned how to add. It was when I was most downcast that a good friend came to my aid; she had kept all her own recipes, writing down all that experience had taught her. She loaned me her book; I studied it.

"I began making a collection of my own recipes; for fifteen years I was collecting material for 'Common Sense in the Household.' It was a labor of love and the writing was easy because I had been writing novels for many years. One million copies were sold the first two years; more copies of that cook book have been sold than of any cook book ever written. I think it was because I mentally put every young cook before me in writing every recipe, and wrote it just as if I were telling her face to face. Then, too, my love for chemistry as a schoolgirl was a great help to me in the whys and wherefores of proportions and mixings.

"Those were busy days. I was writing books, I was helping my sex in the direction in which it at that time needed help most, and I was raising my family. I had six children: The Lord has let me keep three of them. I took the name of Marion Harland because I so liked it; have always used it, and am known in the literary world by no other."

Mrs. Terhune's cook book is not having the vogue now that it had thirty years ago for the reason that housewives today do not dream of cakes containing six to ten eggs, but are looking instead for recipes that are milkless, butterless, eggless. But this does not mean that Mrs. Terhune ceased to be an authority in the kitchen; she has kept pace with the times, and for many years conducted a syndicated department in newspapers in which she discussed everything from matrimony to marmalade, quitting it only a year ago, because the work had become irksome.

As a girl Mrs. Terhune lived in Charlotte Court House, Va., the center of the choicest and most aristocratic life that even Virginia could boast in those pre-war days. Here dwelt the Henrys, the Randolphs, and the Carringtons, and other famous and high-bred families, and it is about this circle of life that "The Carringtons of High Hill," which Mrs. Terhune has just published, tells and elaborates. She is probably the most versatile writer today in America, her work comprising novels, biography, travel, household books, home-making topics, essays and short stories. Over sixty books have come from her pen.

She published her last book in her 88th year; her first writings, "Scribblings About Town," appeared when she was 14. She has been writing for seventy-four years, and still retains a happy, helpful outlook on life.

To all travelers on the road she sends this message:

"I want to tell how well and happy I am in spite of the ninetieth birthday looming in the offing. I don't feel the effects of my age at all. If it were not for broken bones that come back now to oppress me, I would be able to go about and do my part in the world physically as well as mentally.

"My first suggestion for long life and happiness is to obey the rules of health. Make a study of your constitution and do the things you know are good for you. Omit the bad things. Transgressions against the laws of the body are a sin. Exercises every night before retiring, which I still take, and plenty of fresh air, are of the greatest help.

"Secondly, keep yourself in as good mental and spiritual health as you do physical. A conscience devoid of offense toward one's fellow-men is the best aid to this. The Golden Rule is the best prescription that I can offer toward good mental and spiritual health.

"My third and last piece of advice is, in my estimation, the one great secret of happiness. Have some specific work in life; something to get up in the morning for! If I did not have that before me there would be no reason for living. I never find life monotonous, and I try not to look behind me. Retrospection is not good for the soul, unless for the purpose of remembering wrong turns taken in the road and avoiding them when passing that way again. One reason that old people get melancholy and long to die is that they look backward too much, and at the same time don't look out of themselves enough to do things for other people. They say their work is over, yet no day passes when some one, or any one, cannot make somebody's life lighter and brighter. The older I grow the more people do for me, and the more I can do for them. It never fails. The world is full of good people; let's have more of them. This is my message now, and though I may round out the century I don't think it will change except through the addition of greater emphasis."

Mrs. Terhune's life can best be epitomized in the phrase which, coming from her lips, becomes a proverb,

"The profession of home-making is the finest profession that any woman can have."

The Buffaloes Are Coming Back

"THE strangest incident of the whole trip occurred the night of the 27th. It was toward evening, and the train came to a sudden standstill. There was no town in sight, and after a few minutes' halt, I, with two or three of the men in the car, went to the doorway, where the porter had climbed. We were out on the prairie. 'Buffalo,' they told us, when we asked why the train had stopped. Sure enough, there, about a mile ahead of us, was a huge herd of buffaloes. They were crossing the railroad tracks, and they were so numerous that the engineer feared they might wreck his train if they stampeded, and charged the train. 'Besides,' he told me, 'I like to see them, and if I plowed ahead, I might get through, but I'd probably kill several.'"

This is an extract from a letter written many years ago, when the first railroads were stretching out their steel arms across the continent. Those were the days when the land was young—and buffalo, or bison, perhaps the most representative of American animal life, wandered in huge herds all over the plains of the great Middle West.

In the years that followed, these herds were to suffer one of the greatest indignities ever offered to animal life. They were not hunted as the game of sportsmen, they were slaughtered. Buffalo robes were so cheap that anyone might own one, and a buffalo coat was common.

Then came the day of reckoning. Instead of hundreds of herds of buffaloes, there were hundreds of the animals themselves. In 1880 the United States Government ordered a census of the buffaloes remaining alive. This was considerable work, but the figure obtained was so startling that all the work was repaid. There were about 400 of these animals alive in the entire country. The Department of the Interior immediately had a law passed which prohibited these animals being hunted, and declared them property of the United States. Also, they started actively to care for the animals. They were driven onto government ranges, and properly fed. They were watched by game keepers, and shelters were built for them.

There are now approximately 7,000 buffaloes in North America. Canada, where this animal is cared for, as in the United States, has something over 3,500, while the total number in the United States is more than 3,000. This is about seven times the number in the United States when the first buffalo census was taken. Private individuals, or zoological parks in the United States, own approximately 2,000 of the total number in this country. There are eight government herds, six of which are under the control of the Department of Agriculture. The largest herd in this country is in charge of the Department of the Interior, and is located in the Yellowstone National Park, where there are about 450 animals. The Smithsonian Institution now has a herd of 18 at the National Zoological Park, Washington, D. C.

Provision was made in the most recent agricultural appropriation act for the Secretary of Agriculture to give buffaloes to municipalities and public institutions from any surplus which may exist in the herds now under the control of the Department of Agriculture. In order to aid in the propagation of the species the bill provides that animals may be lent to or exchanged with other owners of American bison. No provision is made to give them to individuals, and only one may be given to each municipality or public institution. This provision is made because of the surplus of bulls in some of the Department of Agriculture's buffalo herds, particularly the one in the Wichita National Forest and Game Preserve, in Oklahoma, and because the department is nearing the realization of the first stage in the preservation of the species—the acquisition of at least 1,000 head of buffalo by the government.

The buffaloes are coming back—and a stain of shame will be removed from our history as a people when the animals are numerous enough to assure us that they cannot be wiped out, when the handsomest of native animals again roams its natural haunts, our great prairie country.

Buffalo Herd, National Bison Range, Dixon, Montana.